

weather report

54°

noon
Thursday
Today

• Sunset, 4:37 p.m.
Saturday
• Sunrise, 6:25 a.m.
• Sunset, 4:36 p.m.

Midday Conditions

• Soil temperature 50 degrees
• Humidity 38 percent
• Sky sunny
• Winds northeast at 15 mph
• Barometer 29.75 inches
and falling
• Record High today 87° (1927)
• Record Low today 1° (1950)

Last 24 Hours*

High Wednesday 82°
Low Thursday 40°
Precipitation —
This month —
Year to date 21.96
Above Normal 3.18 inches

The Topside Forecast

Today: Partly cloudy, high near 48, low near 25.

Extended Forecast

Saturday: Mostly sunny, high near 54 and breezy with a low near 32. Sunday: Partly cloudy, high near 50, low around 29. Monday: Partly cloudy, high near 51, low around 25. Tuesday: Partly cloudy, high near 43.

(National Weather Service)
Get 24-hour weather info. at 162.400 MHz.
* Readings taken at 7 a.m.

local markets

Noon

Wheat — \$4.72 bushel
Posted county price — \$4.86
Loan deficiency pmt. — 0¢
Corn — \$3.53 bushel
Posted county price — \$3.27
Loan deficiency pmt. — 0¢
Milo — \$3.18 bushel
Soybeans — \$5.91 bushel
Posted county price — \$5.89
Loan deficiency pmt. — 0¢
Millet — \$7 hundredweight
Sunflowers
NuSun crop — \$12.25
Pinto beans — \$19 (new crop)
(Markets by Mueller Grain, Sigco Sun, Frontier Equity Co-op and 21st Century Bean. These may not be closing figures.)

inside today

More local
news and
views from
your
Goodland
Star-News



Wiffle balls fly this week

A student pitched during a wiffle ball tournament at Max Jones Fieldhouse on Wednesday afternoon. The tournament was held during the “buffer week” between the end of fall sports and winter sports practice. See photo on Page 8a.

Commissioner wins re-election

By Tom Betz

The Goodland Star-News

Incumbent Republican county Commissioner Chuck Thomas turned away a write-in candidate and an independent in District 1 to win re-election Tuesday, though he failed to gain a majority of the votes.

Commissioner Chuck Thomas won with 302 votes for 45.5 percent of the total. Write-in candidate Darin Neufeld had 247 votes for 35.5 percent, and independent Conrad Pettijohn had 126 for 19 percent.

After losing to Thomas by 14 votes in a four-way Republican primary, Neufeld announced in September he would run as a write-in.

Pettijohn filed as an independent before the primary, and his name

was on the ballot.

Reached while unloading corn Thursday morning, Thomas said he was pleased.

“I was happy to win and that there was a good turnout,” Thomas said. “Now that the election is over, hopefully the three commissioners can get our heads back together and make the best decisions for the county.”

“I wish Darin and Conrad the best ... and thank everybody for voting for me.”

The Edson-area farmer said he thinks he will be done with harvest by the end of the week, Monday at the latest. He said yields have been

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County backs Kline, sticks with Sebelius

Sherman County bucked the trend in western Kansas and voted to return Gov. Kathleen Sebelius for a second term.

Voters here joined the majority across the state, giving Democrat Sebelius a 53 percent margin (1,012 votes) to 46 percent (884) for Republican Jim Barnett. Statewide, Sebelius had 58 percent (480,532) to Barnett’s 41 percent (336,583).

Libertarian candidate Carl Kramer had 20 votes in Sherman County and 8,652 statewide for 1 percent and Reform candidate Richard Lee Ranzau had 9 votes and 5,082 statewide.

Surrounding counties of Cheyenne, Rawlins, Thomas, Wallace Logan and most of the southwest voted for Barnett over Sebelius. She won over 60 counties, including the big eastern counties and most of those in the middle of the state including Saline (Salina), Ellis (Hays), Sedgwick (Wichita) and Ford (Dodge City).

Four years ago Sherman County went for Sebelius’ challenger Tim

Shallenburger by six votes 989-983.

Sherman County did the opposite in the attorney general’s race, joining most of the western half of the state in supporting incumbent Republican Phill Kline. Kline carried Sherman County with 57 percent (1,075) to 43 percent (807) for Democrat Paul Morrison. However, statewide Morrison won with 58 percent (479,970) to Kline’s 42 percent (341,300).

In the state Board of Education race in District 5, Republican Sally Cauble, who defeated incumbent Connie Morris of St. Francis in the August primary, easily defeated Democrat Tim Cruz. Sherman County voted for Cauble 68 percent (1,192) to 32 percent (571) for Cruz. Districtwide, Cauble had 65 percent (44,352) to 36 percent (24,374) for Cruz.

Republican state Rep. Jim Morrison had no trouble getting re-elected in House District 121. Sherman County gave him 1,648 votes for 89

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Injured guardsman returns from Iraq

By Tom Betz

The Goodland Star-News

People turned out for an impromptu parade this month to welcome home a Goodland National Guardsman injured by a mortar attack in Iraq.

Staff Sgt. Ernie Gonzales, 46, said he was surprised.

“I did not know it was going to happen,” Gonzales said Tuesday. “I was surprised. It was not something I was expecting. I appreciate everybody doing it for me.”

Gonzales is recuperating at the home of his parents, Mary and Marcos Gonzales, and he will be going back to Fort Gordon, Ga., for tests and possibly surgery on his injured left arm.

“We were sitting outside our control point when the sirens went off,” he said of the mortar attack on his unit’s compound near the northern city of Mosul on Oct. 12. “We headed inside and the next thing I knew a mortar went off behind me by about 10 feet.

“You don’t hear the incoming mortars, only when they hit.”

Gonzales was hit by shrapnel in his left leg and arm and the left side of his back.

“I had a few small pieces in my neck and head,” he said.

Gonzales tells a little story about the moment before the mortar exploded.

“As I was going in the door,” he said, “I heard someone call my name and I turned to the left,” he said. “That is when the mortar exploded. When I looked back, there was no one there.

“Somebody was looking out for me. If I had not turned, they told me I would have taken a full blast and probably would have been killed.”

Gonzales said the mortar attack came about 5:30 p.m. during a pla-



Staff Sgt. Ernie Gonzales with his parents, Mary and Marcos. Gonzales is recuperating at his parents’ house after being hit by mortar fragments in Mosul, Iraq, in October.

Photo by Tom Betz/The Goodland Star-News

toon sergeant meeting. He said hearing mortar shells explode was not unusual, but it was the first time they had been fired against his company’s compound.

“We got them every day,” Gonzales said, “but usually they hit the airfield or near them. You get used to them. You don’t hear them coming in, but you know they are here when they explode.”

He said the mortar that injured him hit three other soldiers, but none was killed.

After he was hit, Gonzales said, he was taken to a military hospital in Iraq and the next day he was flown to Germany. He spent a night there before being flown to Maryland and then to Fort Gordon. He spent about a week in the hospital and then the army sent him home on leave for 30 days to let the swelling go down in

the arm and leg.

Gonzales, wearing a brace on his forearm, said the arm is numb from above the elbow down to his fingers. He said the doctors told him there might be damage to a tendon or ligament.

“Without the brace,” he said, “my wrist just won’t stay straight.”

Gonzales has great things to say about the members of his Kansas National Guard unit, the 714th Security Forces from Olathe.

“My commander, Maj. Paul Gonzales, called my mom when I was in the hospital in Iraq,” he said. “(He) kept my mom informed and did an excellent job. I have known him since he was a lieutenant.

Mary Gonzales said the call was hard.

“That was the worst thing to hear,” she said. “At least he was

alive. I did not now how bad he was hurt, but it was good of the commander to call and let us know.”

Gonzales said he would go back to Iraq, but expects the arm injury will keep him in the states.

“I probably can’t go back because of the lack of use of the hand,” he said. “If they let me, I would go back right now.”

“You would go right now?” his mom asked.

“I can’t go back until the hand is healed,” he said, “and by then the unit will probably be back.

“It is just a bond you get down there with all the guys. It wouldn’t bother me a bit to go back. I would rather do it over there.”

Gonzales said he keeps in contact with the unit.

“I stay in contact with the guys in Iraq about every day,” he said. “Ev-

one student.

Another asked if a real knife was in the scene where Jud is stabbed. Jud, played by Tanner Oharah, made a big scene of removing the knife and then showed the audience that it collapsed when it hit something.

Berls told the audience that auditions for the musical were the first week of September and they started practice it the second week.

Another student asked if anyone got hurt in the fight scenes. Berls said they had some bruises, for

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Aunt Eller, played by Lea Shores, pointed her gun at Andrew Carnes (Devin Mangus) and told him that “the farmers and the cowmen should be friends.” The scene is from “Oklahoma,” being performed at the Goodland High School auditorium at 7 p.m. tonight and Saturday and 1 p.m. Sunday.

Photo by Pat Schiefen/The Goodland Star-News

‘Oklahoma’ opens tonight

By Pat Schiefen

The Goodland Star-News

Around 300 students from North and Central Elementary schools were treated to a slice of the Goodland High School musical, “Oklahoma,” on Tuesday afternoon.

The high school auditorium buzzed like bee hive until the musical started and the room became quiet. After the performance, high school vocal teacher Randy Berls and the cast answered questions from the kids. Public performances are at 7 p.m. tonight and Saturday and 1 p.m. on Sunday at the auditorium.

“There are over 40 people in the cast,” Berls told

everybody was doing good down there when I talked to them yesterday (Monday). I would not trade them for anything. I had a great bunch of people who took care of me.”

Gonzales was activated for Operation Enduring Freedom in 2002 and spent about six month at Fort Riley doing vehicle maintenance with the 995th. Gonzales has been in the National Guard for about 10 years as a member of the 170th maintenance unit in Goodland.

He was reactivated for Operation Iraqi Freedom in April. He spent four months training at Camp Shelby in Mississippi, and then got to spend some time home on leave before flying to Kuwait in early September.

“Kuwait was the hottest,” he said. “It was 130 degrees there. The wind blowing and the sand made it the worst part of the trip.

“Sand storms are different over there. We think we have some here, but nothing like what they have there.”

Gonzales said the weather around Mosul, about 300 miles north of Baghdad, is a lot like the weather in northwest Kansas.

Gonzales said his unit handled security for supply convoys. He was a convoy commander and a platoon sergeant. He said the unit had the new M-1083 tactical vehicles, similar to a 5-ton truck.

“We did security sweeps for trucks going to Turkey and back,” he said. “I was usually in the third vehicle in the convoy, and usually the second or third one is the one that gets hit by a bomb.”

He said the convoys anywhere from 90 to 110 trucks hauling food, lumber, fuel and a little of everything.

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